

Lancers aren't a one-man show

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By Don Lindstrom
State Journal sports reporter

In early January, Madison La Follette's senior guard Bob DiLoreto told Coach Pete Olson that he and his Lancer teammates planned to celebrate his birthday with Gov. Lee Dreyfus in mid-March.

Olson "pooh-poohed" the suggestion then, but now admits that anything is possible with his surprising Lancers.

"You know, with a little luck, Bob's wish could come true," said Olson. "I've been through that before, and I know these kids would like to see it happen again."

What Olson and DiLoreto have in mind is breakfast with the governor Sunday, one of the many social functions required of a newly crowned Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association state basketball champion. Olson's 1977 "Cinderella Kids" did it after coming out of nowhere to win the state title, and now La Follette looks toward a third state tournament trip in six years. The Lancers (17-5) open against Milwaukee North (15-7) at 2:45 p.m., Thursday, at the UW Field House.

Olson figures his Lancers have the talent, confidence and experience to be a state title contender, but no one is looking past North.

"We've had a very tough road in the tournament and had to beat some good teams," he said. "That experience and momentum has to help us."

"It seems we're on a 64-point complex now. If we can get 64 points on that big court and play our usual defense we might win a game or two."

La Follette had to beat East Side rival East, 57-50, then scored 64 points



STATE Basketball tournament

Tom Luksiech. Coming off the bench are 6-2 Brian Hinzman, 6-0 Brad Thering, 6-11 senior Steve Lindauer and 6-1 DiLoreto. The rest of Olson's squad includes Karl Green, Jim Severson and Jon Strangstallen.

Olson, a guard, has scored 612 points to tie Edgewood's Dennis Sweeney for the one-season city record. He also has 1,041 during his three-year career.

"He's a fantastic shooter, as good as any I've ever coached," said Coach Olson. "His assets are his tremendous range, even in the three-point (NBA) area, and his free-throw ability. He's been an 86 percent free thrower for two years, and that really won it for us against Sun Prairie. We want him to get fouled, because it's almost certain free throws."

On the season, Olson has 11 games over 30 points and two over 40 — 42 against Stoughton and 41 against Craig. He also hit 31 points in one half against Sun Prairie in a 39-point performance. Only twice has he been held under 20 points.

"He likes pressure and is a good shooter with defenders close," Coach Olson said. "He carries us early. We've said a lot about Rick this year, but we have a good, balanced team, and if he's not hitting, we go to others."

"Hogan carried us early against Sun Prairie. Then Amundson started to hit. He's a fine shooter, and we like to get the ball to him."

Olson called Hogan the "unsung hero," because he has to play "tough defense and he gives away three or four inches in every game. Nothing bothers him."

Luksiech is a pressure player, but he had a slow start with a knee injury.

Now he has ankle problems, but we sure need his rebounding. He's a good player both inside and outside.

"Amundson probably is our best percentage shooter," the coach continued. "He hit his first four against Sun Prairie but we didn't get him the ball enough."

"Like Amundson, DiLoreto is a good shooter, especially from the corner. Jordan is a hard-working inside player and plays tough defense. Hinzman came off the bench and played well in the tournament. He's only had one bad game. Thering has good court sense and his strength lies with quickness. He has lots of steals."

Olson expected his Lancers to have a good year.

"Our seniors have enjoyed three good years (a combined record of 53-16). In looking back, we might have been 21-1. We were ahead of Watertown, West, Beloit and Parker, but beat ourselves in those games. Our best one probably came against Memorial (75-34), and our tournament game against Stoughton was a great one. I felt that one gave us good momentum."

"Competition is a factor that helps us. The Big Eight was an extremely tough league, not a weak team and anyone could win. That experience has to help us."

"Our kids have balance and a variety of talents, and tradition at our school is beginning to grow. It took 15 years to get to the state, but we're been there three times in the last six years. All our kids, down the line in the grades, are enthused. Basketball success has become a big goal at La Follette."

Olson hopes it continues through the 67th annual state tournament.



Weapon in hand, Rick Olson is La Follette's trigger-man.

— State Journal photo by Edwin Stein